

Island County Critical Areas Ordinance

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas Update

17.02B ISLAND COUNTY CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCE: FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION AREAS UPDATE

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ARTICLE 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

17.02B.10 Purpose and Intent

- A. General: Reserved.
- B. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas: The purposes of the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas regulations are to:
 - 1. Maintain fish and wildlife populations, especially populations of anadromous fish species, by protecting and conserving valuable fish and wildlife habitat and protecting the ecological processes that sustain these resources.
 - 2. Protect valuable terrestrial habitats, natural streams and their associated riparian areas, marine shorelines, and the ecosystem processes on which these areas depend.
 - 3. Regulate development so that isolated populations of species are not created and habitat degradation and fragmentation are avoided.
 - 4. Maintain the natural geographic distribution, connectivity, and quality of fish and wildlife habitat.
- C. Wetlands: Reserved.
- D. Geological Hazards: Reserved.

17.02B.20 Authority

The ordinance is hereby adopted under the authority of Chapters 36.70 and 36.70A RCW.

17.02B.30 Applicability

- A. General: Reserved.

- B. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas: This Chapter shall be consistently applied to development, within geographical areas of unincorporated Island County that meet the definition and criteria for Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCAs) and their buffers as set forth in this chapter. No development shall occur without full compliance with this Chapter.
- C. Wetlands: Reserved.
- D. Geological Hazards: Reserved.

17.02B.40 Relationship to Other Regulations

- A. Island County Code: All Island County development regulations and planning policies shall apply in addition to this Chapter. If a conflict exists between this section and another section or planning policy, the more restrictive shall apply.
- B. Relationship to Shoreline Master Program:
 - 1. All development occurring within the jurisdiction of Island County's Shoreline Master Program shall be governed by the Island County Shoreline Master Program in ICC 17.05 [ICC 17.05A].
 - 2. All development occurring outside of the jurisdiction of Island County's Shoreline Master Program shall be regulated by this section, including those development activities which may be outside of shoreline jurisdiction, but which impact FWHCA within shoreline jurisdiction.
- C. Relationship to SEPA:
 - 1. General: Reserved.
 - 2. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas: FWHCA are hereby declared to be "environmentally sensitive areas" pursuant to WAC 197-11-908.¹
 - 3. Wetlands: Reserved.
 - 4. Geological Hazards: Reserved.
- D. Relationship to other Federal, State, Tribal and Local Jurisdictional Agencies' Regulations: All applicable State, federal, tribal, and regional regulations apply to projects conducted within critical areas. County codes do not eliminate other agency regulatory requirements.
- E. Overlapping Jurisdiction: In cases where other agencies possess jurisdiction over critical areas and it is determined by the Director that permit conditions of those agencies satisfy the requirements of this Chapter, those agency conditions may substitute or supplement Island County permit conditions for the requirements of this Chapter.
 - 1. Such agencies may include, but are not limited to, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service; local Tribes, and the Washington State Department of Ecology, Department of Natural Resources and Department of Fish and Wildlife.

¹ Will require amendment to County SEPA rules too.

2. Such substitute or supplemental conditions may become a condition of critical areas approval as determined by the Director, and in that event, be enforceable by the County.
 3. The County shall notify the applicant in writing when any such substitution or supplement is made.
 4. Any such supplemental conditions may be added to the County permit approval by reference.
- F. In the event provisions of this Chapter conflict with provisions of applicable federal, Tribal, State, County or other applicable regulations, the provision that is most protective of critical areas shall prevail.

17.02B.50 Administrator and Hearing Examiner Authority

- A. The Director of the Department of Planning and Community Development (Director) or his or her designee shall have overall administrative responsibility of this Chapter. The Director, or his/her designee, is hereby vested with the authority to:
1. Advise interested persons and prospective applicants as to the administrative procedures and related components of this Chapter.
 2. Make field inspections as needed, and prepare or require reports on critical area applications.
 3. Determine and collect fees for all necessary permits as provided in County ordinances or resolutions.
 4. Make administrative decisions and interpretations of the policies and regulations of this Chapter consistent with ICC 17.03.190.
 5. Grant or deny exemptions from requirements of this Chapter pursuant to applicable decision criteria, consistent with Type I permit procedures in Chapter 16.19, Land Use Review Process.
 6. To grant, grant with conditions, or deny development pursuant to applicable decision criteria, consistent with Type II permit procedures in Chapter 16.19, Land Use Review Process.
 7. To grant, grant with conditions, or deny Permitted Alterations included in ICC 17.02B.410 in accordance with applicable review criteria and Type II procedures in Chapter 16.19, Land Use Review Process.
 8. Make written recommendations to the Hearing Examiner regarding Variances in accordance with applicable review criteria and Type III procedures in Chapter 16.19, Land Use Review Process.
 9. Make written recommendations to the Planning Commission regarding Habitats and Species of Local Importance consistent with Article 6 and Type IV permit requirements in ICC 16.19 and 16.26.
- B. Consistent with a Type III permit process in Chapter 16.19, Land Use Review Process, the Hearing Examiner is authorized to:
1. Grant or deny Variances under this Chapter.

2. Decide on appeals of administrative decisions issued by the Director of this Chapter.

17.02B.60 Permit Required:

- A. Regulated Activities: All development shall be subject to the requirements of this Chapter. Per subsection D, the Director may apply conditions to the underlying permit or approval to ensure that the development is consistent with the provisions of this Chapter to protect critical areas.
- B. Permit Required: Prior to commencing any development, other than those exempt activities specifically listed in ICC 17.02B.400, on a property containing a critical area, the owner or designee must obtain a development permit.
- C. Finding of Conformance Required: Conformance with these critical area regulations shall be a finding in any approval of a permit required for a development.
- D. Conditions of Approval: The Director may prescribe such conditions and safeguards including timelines and procedural requirements necessary to implement any substantive conditions attached to the permit as are necessary to secure adequate protection of critical areas from adverse impacts, and to ensure conformity with this Chapter.

17.02B.70 General Mitigation Requirements

- A. Developments permitted pursuant to this chapter that adversely impact or alter a critical area or its buffer shall include mitigation sufficient to maintain or replace critical areas functions and values or to minimize risks associated with geologic hazard. "Mitigation" means actions that shall be required or recommended to avoid or compensate for impacts critical areas from the proposed project activity. Complete mitigation ensures no loss of functions or values. Any proposed development that cannot adequately mitigate critical area impacts as determined by the Director shall be denied.
- B. When an impact to a critical area or buffer is proposed, the applicant shall demonstrate that all reasonable efforts have been taken to mitigate impacts in the following prioritized order (consistent with WAC 197-11-768):
 1. Avoiding the impact by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
 2. Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree of the action and its implementation, by using appropriate technology, or by taking affirmative steps to avoid or reduce impacts;
 3. Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
 4. Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action;
 5. Compensating for the impact by replacing, enhancing, or providing substitute resources or environments;
 6. Monitoring the impact and taking appropriate corrective measures.
- C. Mitigation for individual projects may include a sequenced combination of the above measures as needed to achieve the most effective protection or compensatory mitigation for critical area functions.

- D. When a proposal will have an impact on a critical area or its buffer a mitigation plan shall be prepared.
- E. A mitigation plan shall be based on a scientifically valid measure of habitat function, value, and area. Mitigation ratios shall be greater than 1:1 when necessary to compensate for temporal losses, uncertainty of performance, and differences in functions and values. Priorities for mitigation location and type, in the following sequential order of preference, are:
 - 1. On-site, in-kind.
 - 2. Off-site, in-kind.
 - 3. On-site, out-of-kind.
 - 4. Off-site, out-of-kind.
- F. For off-site mitigation to be accepted, the project proponent must demonstrate that greater habitat function and value can be achieved off-site than on-site.
- G. Combination of the four types may be accepted. "On-site" means on or adjacent to the project impact site. "In-kind" means the same species or habitat that was impacted.
- H. Out-of-kind mitigation is not acceptable for impacts to priority habitats and species, with two exceptions:
 - 1. Protected habitats and species that are at greater risk can be substituted for impacted protected habitats and species; and
 - 2. In consultation with WDFW and affected tribes, the Director may consider off-site and/or out-of-kind mitigation where equal or better biological functions and values are provided. Protected habitats, and habitats of protected species, may be replaced at a level greater than the impacts of the project on those habitats and species.
- I. Mitigation that is implemented after project construction, or that requires more than three years to reach replacement value, shall include additional habitat value (over and above replacement value) equal to the loss through time.
- J. Mitigation, monitoring, and adaptive management plans must be developed by a qualified professional(s). This requirement may be waived by the Director for simple mitigation projects where the mitigation plans and methods are easily understood, where mitigation methods have been approved by the County, and where detailed plans are unnecessary for successful project implementation and monitoring.
- K. Mitigation, monitoring, and adaptive management plans shall be reviewed and approved by the Director.
- L. Preparation of mitigation, monitoring, and adaptive management plans, and their review by the County, shall be at the applicant's expense. If review by a third party is necessary because of the complexity of the plans or apparent errors, the Director may require advance payment of fees for this review based on the estimated review time.

- M. Mitigation plans must be appropriate for the scale and scope of the project, and include adequate information for the Director to determine that the project and application are in conformance with approval criteria. Potential components of an application should include, where appropriate, project application such as a JARPA form, maps and diagrams showing the location of all critical areas, applicable critical areas reports, flood studies, grading plans, planting plans, monitoring plans, and other documents supporting the proposal.
- N. The mitigation site shall be protected in perpetuity. This protection shall be through conservation easement, deed restriction, donation to an approved conservation organization, or other legally binding method.
- O. Mitigation Plan Approval Criteria. Approval of mitigation plans shall be based on conformance with the following criteria:
1. The application includes the applicable items listed in ICC 17.02B.070(N).
 2. Mitigation is authorized or required by this code.
 3. Proposed development is designed and located in such a way as to avoid adversely impacting the functions and values of FWHCA, considering the Best Available Science. If adverse impacts cannot be avoided, then they must be fully mitigated so that there will be no net loss of critical area functions and values, considering the Best Available Science.
 4. Removal of noxious weeds or invasive species as part of a mitigation plan shall be consistent with ICC 8.28, as well as RCW 17.10 and WAC 16-750.
 5. Mitigation plans must clearly demonstrate that where habitat is being compensated or created, that:
 - a. the habitat can be replaced;
 - b. that the proposed replacement is feasible;
 - c. that the proposed habitat design plans are technically sound; and
 - d. that habitat is being replaced at a greater than 1:1 ratio where necessary to account for temporal losses or differences in habitat quality.
- P. Recording of Approved Plan and Notice to Title. The County shall record a copy of the approved mitigation plan, along with a Notice to Title referencing the plan, with the cost of recordation included in the application fee.
- Q. If the goals, objectives and performance standards of the mitigation plan are not met, the Director may require additional actions or additional monitoring including:
1. Monitoring. Same as requirements set forth in 17.03.260.I.2.
 2. Contingency plan. A plan which complies with the requirements of 17.03.260.I.1 may be required by the Planning Director to outline restorative measures to be taken should the mitigation fail or only partially succeed.

3. Bonding. A performance bond or other security in an amount to enable the County to carry out the mitigation plan should the applicant fail to do so shall be required.

Note: These mitigation provisions are meant to apply to FWHCAs. But, the section will ultimately cover all critical areas. The County will update these mitigation requirements at the time it updates the remainder of its critical areas code.

17.02B.80 Existing Uses

The application of this Chapter to Existing Uses shall be consistent with ICC 17.03.230 Existing Uses.²

17.02B.90 Appeals

See Chapter 16.19 Land Use Review Process.

17.02B.100 Penalties and Enforcement

Any violation of this Chapter shall be enforced by the Planning Director and shall be subject to the enforcement provisions of Chapter 17.03 ICC.

17.02B.110 Severability

If any provision or provisions of this Chapter or its/their application to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of this Chapter or the application of the provision or provisions to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.

ARTICLE 2. DEFINITIONS

17.02B.200 General Interpretation and Definitions

- A. Interpretation: The purpose of this section is to implement those elements, goals, and policies of the Island County Comprehensive Plan pertaining to FWHCA and Growth Management Act requirements. If any provision of this section conflicts with a provision of another section of Island County Code or the Island County Comprehensive Plan the more restrictive or protective shall apply. The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan pertaining to critical areas should be used to inform decisions regarding interpretations.
- B. Words and Terms: Whenever the words and terms set forth in this Article appear in this Chapter, they shall be given the meaning attributed to them by this Article. When not inconsistent with the context, words used in the present tense shall include the future; the singular shall include the plural and the plural the singular; the word "shall" is always mandatory and the words "may" and "should" indicate a use of discretion in making a decision. Except where specifically defined in this Article or in other Titles or Chapter of the Island County Code, all words used in this Chapter shall carry their customary meanings.

² Revise the Existing Uses Section; currently the existing uses section only references ICC 17.02A.

- C. General Definitions: Unless modified by 17.02B.210 et seq. definitions in ICC 17.02A.030 Definitions shall apply. If a given term is not defined in ICC 17.02B.210 or ICC 17.02A.030, the definitions listed in 17.03.040 shall apply.³

17.02B.210 Definitions – Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas:

- A. Adequate Building Site: An area large enough to accommodate a reasonably sized home, driveway, utilities, septic system, and, if necessary, a well.
- B. Agricultural Activities, Existing and On-Going: Those activities conducted on lands defined in RCW 84.34.020(2), and those activities involved in the production of crops or livestock. These activities include the operation and normal maintenance of legally existing farm and stock ponds or drainage ditches, operation and normal maintenance of legally existing non-regulated water courses, changes between agricultural activities, and normal maintenance, repair, or operation of legally existing serviceable structures, facilities, or improved areas. Activities which bring an area into agricultural use are not part of an ongoing operation. An operation ceases to be on-going when the area on which it is conducted is converted to a nonagricultural use or has lain idle for more than five (5) years, unless the idle land is registered in a federal or State soils conservation program other than Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and other riparian buffer enhancements. Forest practices and maintenance of legally existing vegetation, landscaping and gardens are not included in this definition.
- C. Best Management Practices: Conservation practices, systems of practices and management, and mitigation measures that:
1. control soil loss and reduce water quality degradation; and
 2. minimize adverse impacts to surface water and ground water flow, circulation patterns, and
 3. minimize adverse impacts to the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of critical areas.
- The Department shall maintain a selection of best management practices which have been approved by the Board for those uses which are subject to best management practices.
- D. Clearing: Cutting, killing, grubbing or removing vegetation or other organic plant material by physical, mechanical, chemical or any other similar means. For the purpose of this definition of "clearing," "cutting" means the severing of the main trunk or stem of woody vegetation at any point.
- E. Critical Area: For the purposes of this ordinance the term "critical area" shall refer to Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA) and their buffers.⁴

³ Concurrent with this update ICC 17.03.040 should be amended to indicate that the definitions in ICC 17.03.040 apply unless a more specific definition is provided elsewhere in the Title.

⁴ The definition can be amended to add other GMA critical areas once the codes are consolidated.

- F. Deepwater Habitats or Ponds: Any open freshwater area that has a mean annual water depth greater than 6.6 feet, lacks soil, and/or is either unvegetated or supports only floating or submersed macrophytes and is not a lake or Category C pond as defined in ICC 17.05 or 17.02A.
- G. Department: The Island County Department of Planning and Community Development.
- H. Development: Any activity that results in a use or modification of land or its resources. Development activities include, but are not limited to: dredging, drilling, dumping, filling, earth movement, clearing or removal of vegetation; storage of materials or equipment; building or construction; boundary line adjustments, lot segregations, subdivision and short subdivisions; binding site plans; planned residential developments (PRDs); variances; shoreline substantial development; activity conditionally allowed; and septic approval.⁵
- I. Development Permit: A permit issued by Island County which authorizes development.
- J. Dike: A manmade embankment or revetment normally set back from the river bank or channel in the floodplain for the purpose of keeping floodwaters from inundating adjacent land.
- K. Diking: A system of levees or banks, usually constructed of earth to control or confine water and create a protection against tidal or floodwaters. Where coastal dikes are located within shoreline jurisdiction, they are regulated in the Shoreline Master Program (ICC 17.05) [ICC 17.05A].
- L. Diking and Drainage System: Any lawfully constructed combination of dike, levee, and drainage which actually does or is designed to prevent inundation and facilitate drainage of land upland of the ordinary high water mark.
- M. Drainage Ditch: A non-regulated watercourse constructed to drain surface or ground water. Ditches are graded (manmade) channels installed to collect and convey runoff from fields and roadways, except those that directly result from the modification to a natural watercourse. Ditches that support salmonids are considered to be streams.
- N. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA): FWHCA are areas that serve a critical role in sustaining needed habitats and species for the functional integrity of the ecosystem, and which, if altered, may reduce the likelihood that the species will persist over the long term. These areas may include, but are not limited to, rare or vulnerable ecological systems, communities, and habitat or habitat elements including seasonal ranges, breeding habitat, winter range, and movement corridors; and areas with high relative population density or species richness. Counties may also designate locally important habitats and species (WAC 365-190-030(6)(a)).
- O. Grading: Any excavating or filling or combination thereof.

⁵ This definition is similar to other codes such as Island, Skagit and Whatcom Counties' CAO. The current Island County CAO has a definition of development proposal as follows: Development Proposal: Any activity that requires authorization from Island County for a Lot that contains or is affected by a Critical Area or Critical Area Buffer. Development Proposals include Subdivisions, Short Subdivisions, PRDs, Conditional Use Permits, Site Plan Approvals, Boundary Line Adjustments, Septic Permits and Clearing/Grading Permits.

- P. Hazard Tree: Any tree that is susceptible to immediate fall due to its condition (damaged, diseased, or dead) or other factors, and which because of its location is at risk of damaging permanent physical improvements to property or causing personal injury.
- Q. Land Division: For the purposes of this chapter, Land Division means the segregation of a parcel of land into smaller parcels or lots, including land divisions, lot segregations, or boundary line adjustments as defined in ICC 16.06.040.
- R. Maintenance or Repair: Usual acts to prevent a decline, lapse, or cessation from a lawfully established condition or restores a development to a state comparable to its original condition, including but not limited to maintaining the same size, shape, configuration, location and appearance, provided such restoration is commenced within a reasonable period of time. Replacement of a structure is not considered normal maintenance or repair⁶, except where specifically authorized in this Code or ICC 17.03.230. Greater than fifty (50%) repair of a structure over any three year period constitutes replacement as measured by the area repaired, provided this measure does not apply to paving of existing improved rights of way or to repairs intended to improve ecological conditions or habitat, such as fish passage. This does not include any activities that change the character, scope, or size of the original structure, facility, utility or improved area beyond the original design unless specifically allowed in this Chapter in order to improve ecological conditions or habitat, such as fish passage.
- S. Non-regulated Watercourse: Ditches and other water conveyance systems, not constructed from natural or modified stream channels, which are artificially constructed and actively maintained for irrigation and drainage, are not used by salmonids or to convey water from an existing regulated wetland.
- T. Planning Policies: Planning policies means policies contained in the Island County Comprehensive Plan.
- U. Perturbation: Deviation of an ecological system or process from its regular or normal state of path, caused by an outside influence.
- V. Primary Association: Use of an area by a protected species for rearing young, roosting, breeding, or foraging on a regular basis during the appropriate season, as well as habitats that are used less frequently or regularly but which provide for essential life cycle functions. Areas of Primary Association for listed salmonids shall include all aquatic environments in which they reside, as well as riparian environments necessary to support the formation and function of the aquatic environment. Areas of Primary Association for protected flora and fungi include both the immediate area where the species occurs and the contiguous habitat necessary for its long term persistence.
- W. Protected Species: Fish and wildlife species and their associated habitat that are regulated as FWHCA in this Chapter.

⁶ Up to this point, the definition is consistent with the locally adopted SMP. The exception for replacement is added to allow for replacement of culverts, etc. that improve environmental conditions.

- X. **Qualified Professional:** A person with experience and training with expertise appropriate for the relevant critical area subject in accordance with WAC [365-195-905](#)(4). A qualified professional for FWHCA must have a degree in wildlife biology, ecology, fisheries, or a closely related field and a minimum of three years of professional experience related to the subject species/habitat type.
- Y. **Reasonable Use:** The minimum logical or rational use of a specific parcel of land which a person can be expected to conduct or maintain fairly and appropriately taking into account specific site characteristics.
- Z. **Regulated Activities:** All development occurring within designated FWHCA and their buffers that is not determined to be exempt by the Director in accordance with Section 17.02B.400.
- AA. **Remodel:** To renew, renovate or make over a part of an existing building for the purpose of its appearance or layout. Remodel may include repair or relocation of interior walls but does not include repair, replacement or relocation of any of the exterior floors, walls or roof.
- BB. **Serviceable:** Infrastructure that is currently usable and durable enough to perform its intended function according to Island County or other responsible agency design and construction standards.
- CC. **Stream:** The following features are defined as streams and are regulated as FWHCA under the provisions of ICC 17.02B:
 - 1. **Natural Stream Channels:** Those areas where naturally occurring surface waters produce a defined channel, bed, bank or side, and where there is clear evidence of the passage of water such as bedrock channels, gravel beds, sand and silt beds and defined channel swales. The channel or bed need not contain water year-round. Further, natural stream channels are watercourses with headwaters that follow a historic natural watercourse that has not been altered, channelized, relocated, and/or constrained.
 - 2. **Modified Stream Channels:** Those natural stream channels with or without headwaters that follow and/or replace historic natural watercourses that have been significantly channelized, relocated, and/or constrained. Modified stream channels include segments of a stream that have been legally modified, and are in compliance with all necessary permits in effect at the time of its approval.⁷
 - 3. **Artificial Channel:** Watercourses that exhibit all of the following features:
 - a. Channels without headwaters ; and
 - b. Channels wholly built by humans ; and
 - c. Channels that do not follow or replace a historic natural watercourse; and
 - d. Channels designed to convey water from local surface areas or subsurface drains for the purpose of removing excess water in order to improve conditions for the associated land

⁷ There are 8 diking and drainage districts, but 2 are inactive. See "List of Special Districts by Type of District and by County." MSRC February 2013. www.msrc.org/subjects/governance/spd/spdcountytype.xls.

use; artificial channels may include lateral field ditches used to drain farmland where the ditch did not replace a natural stream channel; and

- e. Channels either used by salmonids or channels that convey water from or through an existing regulated wetland.

Artificially created channels that serve to connect other streams are regulated as streams. This definition excludes those areas which have no defined channel, bed, bank or side; see wetland definition in Chapter 17.02A.

17.02B.220 Definitions – Wetlands Definitions: Reserved.

17.02B.230 Definitions – Geological Hazards Definitions: Reserved.

ARTICLE 3. DESIGNATION, CLASSIFICATION AND MAPPING

17.02B.300 Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

- A. Designation Criteria. FWHCA are those areas identified as being of critical importance to the maintenance of certain fish and wildlife species. FWHCA areas are typically identified either by known point locations of specific species (such as a nest or den) or by habitat areas or both. All areas within the County meeting these criteria are hereby designated critical areas and are subject to the provisions of ICC 17.02B. FWHCA shall include all of the following:

1. Areas with a primary association with endangered, threatened, and sensitive species;
 - a. Federally designated endangered and threatened species are those fish and wildlife species identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service that are in danger of extinction or threatened to become endangered. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service should be consulted for current listing status.
 - b. State designated endangered, threatened, and sensitive species are those fish and wildlife species native to the State of Washington identified by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, that are in danger of extinction, threatened to become endangered, vulnerable, or declining and are likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of their range within the State without cooperative management or removal of threats. State designated endangered, threatened, and sensitive species are periodically recorded in WAC 232-12-014 (State endangered species) and WAC 232-12-011 (State threatened and sensitive species). The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains the most current listing and should be consulted for current listing status.
2. Streams and Waters of the State.
 - a. Stream types shall be classified according to WAC 222-16-030. Stream classifications shall include the following:
 - i. Type S streams are those streams inventoried as “shorelines of the state” under 90.58 RCW and ICC 17.05 [17.05A] and are regulated under ICC 17.05 [17.05A];

- ii. Type F streams are those that are not Type S but still provide fish habitat;
 - iii. Type Np streams are perennial waters that do not contain fish habitat; and
 - iv. Type Ns streams are seasonal waters that do not contain fish habitat, but are physically connected by an above-ground channel system to Type S, F, or Np waters.
- b. In the case that available information on stream typing is unclear, the Director shall require stream typing be performed using a site visit, mapping and all available information by a qualified professional.
- 3. State Natural Area Preserves, Natural Resource Conservation Areas, and State Wildlife Areas.
- 4. All areas designated by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through the Washington Natural Heritage Program (NHP) as high quality terrestrial ecosystems and shown on the most recent NHP maps and data.
- 5. Flora species included in the Protected Species list in Article 6.
- 6. Habitats and Species of Local Importance. Habitats and species of local importance are identified by the County or nominated by individuals or organizations according to the process in Article 6 and have the following characteristics:
 - a. Habitats and species of local importance have recreational, cultural, and/or economic value to citizens of Island County.
 - b. Habitats and species of local importance are not adequately protected, by other County, State, or federal policies, laws, regulations, or nonregulatory tools that prevent degradation of the habitat or species.
 - c. Habitats and species of local importance represent either high-quality native habitat or habitat that has a high potential to recover to a suitable condition and which is of limited availability, highly vulnerable to alteration, or provides landscape connectivity which contributes to the integrity of the surrounding landscape.
 - d. Habitats and species of local importance, without protection, would be diminished locally over the long term.
- B. The following habitats and species that are listed under WAC 365-190-130 shall be regulated under the Island County Shoreline Master Program (ICC 17.05 [17.05A]) (except where upland development activities outside jurisdiction would impact these habitats and species):
 - 1. Areas where endangered, threatened and sensitive marine species have a primary association;
 - 2. Commercial and recreational shellfish areas;
 - 3. Kelp and eelgrass beds; herring smelt and other forage fish spawning areas.
- C. Mapping: Map sources showing the approximate location and extent of FWHCA include, but are not limited to critical areas maps adopted or commissioned by the County, such as maps included in the Island County Comprehensive Plan, FWHCA Best Available Science and Existing Conditions Report

(The Watershed Company and Parametrix, 2014), and WDFW Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) maps, as most recently updated. These maps are to be used as a guide for the County, project applicants, and/or property owners and will be periodically updated as new critical areas are identified. They are a reference and do not provide a final critical areas designation.

17.02B.310 Wetlands: Reserved

17.02B.320 Geological Hazardous Areas: Reserved

ARTICLE 4. EXEMPTIONS AND VARIANCES

17.02B.400 Exempt Activities

- A. The following activities noted with an “E” as “allowed exemptions” are excepted from the provisions of this Chapter provided standard environmental protection criteria in Subsection B and exemption threshold criteria of Subsection C are met as determined by the Director.
1. If an allowed exemption does not otherwise require a development permit no specific critical areas permit will be required. In those instances where an allowed exemption requires a development permit from Island County, the proposal shall be reviewed in conjunction with the underlying permit for compliance with the provisions of this section.
 2. The Director may, at his/her discretion issue a written letter of exemption for exempt activities. In those instances where the Director determines a written letter of exemption is required, the exemption decision shall be processed as a Type I permit in accordance with ICC 16.19.

	Exemption	FWHCA	Wetlands: RESERVED	Geological Hazards: RESERVED
1.	Existing and on-going agricultural activities as defined in Article 2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This exemption includes normal maintenance of non-regulated watercourses related to an existing and on-going agricultural activity. An existing and on-going agricultural activity or operation ceases to be on-going when the area on which it is conducted is converted to a nonagricultural use or has lain idle for more than five (5) years, unless the idle land is registered in a federal or State soils conservation program other than CREP and other riparian buffer enhancements. The existing ongoing agriculture exemption and associated allowances for maintenance of non-regulated water courses shall not continue or transfer when a new use is established and the existing ongoing agriculture activity is discontinued. 	E		
2.	Forest practices regulated and conducted in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 76.09 RCW and forest practice regulations, Title 222 WAC, and which are exempt from Island County jurisdiction. The condition of the land in question shall be in compliance with County ordinances and regulations including this Chapter 17.02B. If full compliance is not found, a mitigation plan shall be required for the parcel in question pursuant to RCW 76.09.470.	E		
3.	Normal maintenance or repair of existing serviceable public or private roads, paths, bicycle ways, trails, bridges, and associated storm drainage facilities. Where reconstruction is the normal method for maintenance or repair, it is considered exempt if it does not change the character, scope, or size of the original structure, facility, utility or improved area beyond the original design, unless such changes are intended to improve ecological conditions or habitat, such as fish passage.	E		

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	Exemption	FWHCA	Wetlands: RESERVED	Geological Hazards: RESERVED
4.	Normal maintenance and repair of existing serviceable drainage facilities or systems, including, but not limited to, non-regulated watercourses, culverts, catch basins, and outfalls provided that there is no expansion of facilities or change in conveyance capacity. This exemption includes replacement where it is the normal method of maintenance and repair and where such facilities are designed to provide improvement to FWHCA functions, e.g. replacement of a culvert to provide for fish passage.	E		
5.	Normal and routine maintenance or repair of existing utility facilities or rights-of-way.	E		
6.	Installation, construction, relocation, operation, repair, or alteration of all utility lines, equipment, or appurtenances, not including substations, in improved and maintained road rights-of-way. Replacement may be considered an exempt activity if it is the normal method of repair, as determined by the Director. Relocation of utility lines, equipment, or appurtenances shall occur as far as feasible from the FWHCA or its buffer.	E		
7.	Reconstruction, remodeling, or maintenance of existing structures, provided there is no further intrusion into a critical area or its buffer. This exemption excludes the intentional demolition of existing structures where the reconstructed structure can be accommodated outside of the critical area and its buffer.	E		
8.	Site investigative work necessary for development permit submittals, or County-authorized monitoring activities, such as surveys, soil logs, and percolation tests provided there is no clearing, fill or use of heavy equipment in a critical area or impacts to its buffer.	E		
9.	Emergency action necessary to prevent imminent threat or danger to public health or safety, or to public or private property, or serious environmental degradation. The Department shall review all proposed emergency actions to determine the existence of the emergency and reasonableness of the proposed actions taken unless the nature of the emergency is such that it is not possible to first gain approval of the Department, in which case such review must occur within ten (10) days of the conclusion of the emergency work.	E		
10.	Provided such actions do not increase the size or capacity of such facilities operation, normal maintenance and repair of existing dikes, non-regulated watercourse, reservoirs, and other structures and facilities which were created or developed as part of normal flood control activities on or prior to December 31, 1984, except that this exemption does not extend to draining or alteration of any regulated wetland.	E		
11.	Provided such actions do not increase the size or capacity of such facilities, operation, normal maintenance and repair of existing non-regulated watercourses, reservoirs, ponds and other structures and facilities which were created or developed as part of normal irrigation activities on or prior to December 31, 1984. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal maintenance of non-regulated water courses is not considered exempt if maintenance of such watercourses is discontinued as per ICC 17.03.230.I Existing Uses. 	E		
12.	Normal maintenance and repair of legally existing yard or garden structures when such activities are part of normal maintenance activities and no building permit is required. This exemption does not allow further intrusion into a critical area or its buffer.	E		
13.	Maintenance activities including, but not limited to, cutting, mowing lawns, weeding, removal of noxious and invasive species, harvesting and replanting of garden crops, pruning and planting of noninvasive ornamental vegetation or indigenous native species to maintain the general condition and extent of such areas; provided, that such maintenance activities are limited to existing landscaping improvements and do not further expand into critical areas or associated buffers, , do not alter topography, do not destroy or clear native vegetation, do not remove non-hazard trees in the buffer or critical area, and do not diminish water quality or quantity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native growth protection areas, mitigation sites, or other areas protected via 	E		

	Exemption	FWHCA	Wetlands: RESERVED	Geological Hazards: RESERVED
	conservation easements or similar restrictive covenants are not covered by this exception.			
14.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The removal or control of noxious weeds listed in Chapter 16-750 WAC and consistent with ICC Chapter 8.28. The removal or control of Invasive Species including, but not limited to, Himalayan Blackberry and Evergreen Blackberry shall be with hand labor, herbicides and/or hand-held mechanical tools. Use of heavy equipment may be allowed if approved by the Planning Director subject to Subsections B and C. All herbicide applications in aquatic environments shall conform to the rules of the Department of Ecology, Department of Agriculture and Department of Natural Resources, pursuant to Chapters 173-201, 16-228, and 222 WAC. <p>Provided that, noxious weeds or invasive species removed from a critical area or critical area buffer shall be removed using Best Management Practices and shall be taken away and disposed of appropriately. Revegetation with appropriate native plant species at natural densities is allowed in conjunction with the removal. Unless the Director determines that a larger acreage meets the criteria in Subsections B and C, or is proposed at federal, state, or county approved habitat mitigation bank, the Director shall limit the size of the noxious weeds removal or control of invasive species to an area equal to or less than 1 acre.</p>	E		

B. Standard Exemption Environmental Protection Criteria: Proposed exempt activities shall comply with the following environmental protection criteria in addition to meeting any provisions contained in the exemption description in Subsection A:

1. Exempt activities shall be undertaken pursuant to best management practices to minimize impacts to critical areas. The Director has the discretion to specify what best management practices are appropriate to minimize impacts.
2. Subject to prior approval by the Director, exempt activities shall provide for the restoration of any disturbed critical area or its buffer. Restoration of a disturbed area requires revegetation of native species appropriate for the site and local environment. Revegetation may include planting, seeding, or relying on the existing soil seed bank. The Director may require monitoring to assure that the site is not reoccupied by invasive species.
3. Reserved: Drainage best management practices.

C. Threshold Criteria for Exemptions: The following criteria are considered threshold criteria for exemptions and must be determined to be met by the Director to be considered exempt.

1. Where a proposed exemption is unlisted and requires interpretation as to whether the exemption is fundamentally similar to the listed exemptions, or where the exemption request is complex, the Director may require an applicant to provide a written description of the proposed exempt activity describing how the proposal meets the description of an exempt activity in Subsection A and the Standard Exemption Environmental Protection Criteria in

Subsection B. In such cases, the applicant shall provide a map identifying the location of the proposed exempt activity and the applicable type of critical area and its buffer.

2. The Director shall make a written determination that a proposed activity is exempt, based on affirmatively meeting the following criteria:
 - a. Does the proposal meet the description of an exempt activity in Subsection A and the Standard Exemption Environmental Protection Criteria in Subsection B.
 - b. Is the exemption occurring in the smallest practical area or length necessary to accomplish the proposed activity?
 - c. Is the magnitude and duration of the proposal unlikely to result in a measurable adverse impact to the critical area?
 - d. Where maintenance, repair, replacement or reconstruction is proposed does the activity avoid changing the character, scope, or size of the original structure, facility, utility or improved area beyond the original design, or result in a measurable ecological improvement?
 - e. Are the potential impacts of the proposed exemption clear and minor, thus not requiring review as a regulated activity?
4. Where threshold criteria for exemptions are not met, the proposal shall be considered a regulated activity and subject to the provisions of this Chapter.

17.02B.410 Permitted Alterations

- A. The actions in Subsections B through E shall be considered permitted uses, provided they are consistent with the general standards for mitigation sequencing per ICC 17.02B.70.B and other applicable requirements established in this Chapter.
 1. The Director shall require a Biological Site Assessment per Section 17.02B.510 to evaluate the Permitted Alteration. A mitigation plan shall also be required by the Director consistent with Section 17.02B.70.
 2. The Director may waive the preparation of a Biological Site Assessment or mitigation plan if the permitted alteration would have clearly defined and minor impacts and conditions of approval or mitigation are known.
- B. General Alterations: Reserved.
- C. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas:
 1. Limited public park or public recreational access; provided, that all of the following are satisfied:
 - a. The access is part of a public park that is dependent on the access for its location and recreational function; and
 - b. The access is limited to the minimum necessary to accomplish the recreational function; and

- c. The removal of trees and native vegetation is minimized; and
 - d. The access and the balance of the development are consistent with other requirements of 17.02B; and
 - e. The proponent obtains written approval from the County for the limited access and associated mitigation.
2. Low-impact uses and activities which are consistent with the purpose and function of the buffer when such improvements are limited to the minimum amount necessary and do not detract from its integrity may be permitted within the buffer depending on the sensitivity of the habitat involved; provided, that such activity shall not result in a decrease in FWHCA functions and values and shall not prevent or inhibit the buffer's recovery to at least pre-altered condition or function.
3. Roads or utilities may be allowed to alter a fish and wildlife habitat conservation area or its buffer when there is no feasible alternative that is less environmentally damaging and provided the following conditions are met:
- a. Roads and utilities shall be located as far as feasible from fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas and buffers. Where avoidance is not feasible, roads and utilities shall be located in the least environmentally damaging practical location.
 - b. Roads and utilities shall not be located over habitat used for salmonid rearing or spawning or by a species listed as endangered or threatened by the State or federal government unless the Director determines that there is no other feasible crossing site.
 - c. Paralleling the stream or following a down-valley route near the stream shall be avoided when possible.
 - d. The width of fill and improvements shall be minimized.
 - e. Culverts may be installed when necessary to maintain hydrology and fish passage on Type F streams.
 - f. Best management practices shall be employed during construction.
 - g. Mitigation shall be proportionate to the impacts and provided pursuant to ICC 17.02B.70.B.
- For purposes of interpreting this section "utilities" do not include septic system components or wells except as provided for below in subsection 6.
4. Installation of underground utilities or moderate impact stormwater facilities, such as grass-lined swales, in required buffers when there is no feasible alternative that is less environmentally damaging and when such improvements are limited to the minimum amount necessary and when the removal of native vegetation is minimized.
5. Conservation, preservation, or enhancement projects. The Director shall require a Biological Site Assessment per Section 17.02B.510 in order to determine whether the proposed activity

would conserve, preserve or enhance critical areas functions in the long-term and is designed to minimize temporary environmental impacts.

6. New single family residences on existing, legal lots may intrude into critical areas or their buffers where the following conditions are met:
 - a. As a first step, contiguous lots in common ownership, or otherwise under the control of the applicant/owner shall be combined, consolidated, or considered as a single development site if doing so would allow the home to be constructed outside of the critical area or critical area buffer, or if doing so would minimize impacts to the critical area or its buffer.
 - b. It is demonstrated that it is not feasible to avoid the critical area or its buffer.
 - c. Alteration of the critical area and its buffer including all clearing, grading and structures, has not and will not exceed cumulatively 2,800 square feet.
 - d. Proposed alterations are the minimum necessary and located so as to have the least impact on the critical area and its buffer.
 - e. The proposal does not degrade the functions of fish and wildlife habitat conservation and associated buffer beyond that needed to achieve a reasonable use as determined by the Director.
 - f. Adverse impacts resulting from alterations of steep or geologically hazardous slopes are minimized.
 - g. The proposal includes on-site mitigation required by this Chapter to the extent feasible as determined by the Director.
 - h. Disturbed critical areas and their buffers will be immediately restored consistent with an approved mitigation plan.
 - i. This action does not allow fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas or their buffers to be converted to lawn or residential landscaping beyond a minimal area needed to maintain an approved structure.

D. Wetlands: Reserved

E. Geological Hazardous Areas: Reserved

17.02B.420 Variances

Variances from the standards of this Chapter may be authorized by Island County in accordance with the procedures set forth in ICC Chapter 16.19 for Type III decisions. The Hearing Examiner shall review the request and make a written finding that the request meets or fails to meet the variance criteria contained in Subsections A.1 et seq.

- A. Variance Criteria. A variance may be granted from standards of this Chapter, only if the applicant demonstrates that the requested action conforms the Variance approval criteria enumerated in ICC 17.03.210⁸ as well all of the criteria set forth as follows:
1. Special conditions and circumstances exist that are peculiar to the land, the lot, or something inherent in the land, and that are not applicable to other lands in the same district; and
 2. The special conditions and circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant or owner; and
 3. The inability to derive reasonable use of the property is not the result of subdividing the property or adjusting a boundary line, thereby creating the undevelopable condition after October 1, 1998; and
 4. A literal interpretation of the provisions of this Chapter would deprive the applicant of all reasonable use of the subject property under the terms of this Title, and the variance requested is the minimum necessary to provide the applicant with such rights; and
 5. Granting the variance requested will not confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by this Chapter to other lands, structures, or buildings under similar circumstances; and
 6. The granting of the variance is consistent with the general purpose and intent of this Chapter, and will not further degrade the functions or values of the subject critical areas; and
 7. The proposed development does not pose a threat to public health, safety and welfare on or off the subject property; and
 8. Any alterations permitted pursuant to the requirements of this Chapter shall be the minimum necessary to allow for reasonable use of the property; and
 9. The decision to grant the variance considers best available science for the critical area and gives special consideration to conservation and protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fish habitat;
 10. The mitigation sequencing provisions of ICC 17.02B.70.B have been applied; and
 11. The proposal mitigates the impacts on the critical area to the maximum extent possible, while still allowing reasonable use of the lot; and
 12. The granting of the variance is consistent with the general purpose and intent of the Island County Comprehensive Plan and adopted development regulations.
- B. Conditions May Be Required. In granting any variance, the Hearing Examiner shall prescribe such conditions and safeguards as are necessary to secure adequate protection of critical areas from adverse impacts, and to ensure conformity with this Chapter.

⁸ Minor changes will need to be included in ICC 17.03.210, Variances, in order to include deviations from critical area standards.

- C. Time Limit. The Hearing Examiner shall prescribe a time limit within which the action for which the variance is required shall be begun, completed, or both.
- D. A report prepared by a qualified professional shall accompany a variance proposal to provide information on the functions and values of the critical area or critical area buffer proposed for alteration, the impact of the proposed development on the critical area and its buffer, what constitutes a reasonable use of the property, steps taken to achieve mitigation sequencing, consistent with ICC 17.02B.070.B, including avoidance and minimization, an explanation of the portion of the code the proposed development was not compliant with, and other information as deemed necessary by the Director.
- E. A Variance shall not permit the creation of a lot that would otherwise be prohibited by ICC 17.02B.500.A.

ARTICLE 5. EVALUATION AND PROTECTION STANDARDS

17.02B.500 General: Reserved

- A. Land Divisions and Related Actions. No land segregation, land division, or boundary line adjustment shall create a lot which does not include an adequate building site outside of critical areas and their associated buffers.
- B. Overlapping Critical Area – Interpretations. Where critical area protections overlap, the most protective regulations shall apply. Management of the required buffers shall depend on the critical area function being protected. Examples are provided below:
 - 1. Example A: Where a stream buffer and a wetland buffer overlap, the regulated buffer would extend to the outer width of the more extensive required buffer.
 - 2. Example B: Steep slope setbacks may limit alteration, structures and infiltration. Stream buffers may be managed for water quality such as filtration and recharge. If infiltration is not appropriate for slope stability, steep slope standards would apply.

17.02B.510 Evaluation Requirements – Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

- A. Site Assessment and Submittal Requirements. When a development proposal is located within 1,000 feet of a habitat for a Protected Species or an identified critical area or its buffer, based upon maps and other information available to or maintained by the County, as described in 17.02B.300(C), and when the applicant proposes to alter, decrease or average a standard stream buffer, a Biological Site Assessment (BSA) shall be required.
 - 1. The requirement for a BSA can be waived by the Director, if the Director determines that the proposed development would result in only minor impacts.
- B. Biological Site Assessment Contents. A BSA shall be prepared by a qualified professional at the expense of the applicant. The level of detail in a BSA should be proportionate to the location, size and impacts of the project proposal. Unless modified by the Director, a BSA shall include:

1. A site plan indicating all FWHCA, their buffers, and any other Critical Area or buffer falling on or within four-hundred (400) feet of the portion of the subject property proposed for development.
2. Descriptions of all FWHCA shown on the site plan;
3. Description of the proposed project, including, but not limited to, clearing associated earthwork (grading, excavation, filling), structures, utilities, and existing habitat other than FWHCA (wetlands, other vegetated areas, including areas which may act as corridors, ravines or steep slopes, etc.); and
4. Analysis of impacts to the protected species or habitats. A discussion of impacts to all FWHCA must be included;
5. The spatial extent of impact to critical areas and their buffers shall be quantified;
6. Regulatory summary, identifying other agencies with jurisdiction.;
7. Best Management Practices, including a discussion of on-going maintenance practices that will assure protection of all FWHCA on-site after the project has been completed. If monitoring is required, this section shall include a description of proposed monitoring criteria, methods, and schedule.
8. The recommendations of the BSA, once approved, shall be included as conditions of approval of the underlying permit.

17.02B.520 Protection Standards – Streams and other Aquatic Habitats

- A. Buffers Required. Protective riparian buffers shall be required to preserve stream/riparian functions and values.
- B. Buffer Conditions. Stream buffers shall be maintained in an undeveloped state and should be densely vegetated with native vegetation adequate to protect the stream or resource's functions and values. Activities allowed in stream buffers are listed in ICC 17.02B.410.
- C. Purpose of Buffers. The purpose of riparian buffers is to protect riparian functions that influence in-stream and near-stream habitat quality. These include, but are not limited to:
 1. Recruitment of Large Woody Debris (LWD). LWD creates habitat structures necessary to maintain salmon/trout and other aquatic organisms' productive capacity and species diversity.
 2. Temperature and Microclimates. Temperature and microclimates influence water temperatures and the availability of oxygen needed for salmon/trout and other aquatic organisms. Temperature is influenced by shading.
 3. Bank Integrity (Root Reinforcement). Bank integrity influences habitat quality and water quality by reducing bank erosion and creating habitat structure and in-stream hiding cover for salmon/trout and other aquatic organisms.
 4. Sediment and Contaminant Filtration. Filtration of nutrients, sediments and other contaminants in runoff (surface and shallow subsurface flows) influences water quality.

5. Wildlife Habitat. Functional wildlife habitat for all life stages of riparian-dependent species is based on sufficient quantity and quality of riparian vegetation to provide for those needs including protection for nesting and feeding and detrital inputs for food.
- D. Standard Buffers. Buffer distances shall be measured horizontally from the ordinary high water mark of the stream. Standard stream buffer widths are shown in the table below. A stream buffer shall have the width recommended, unless a greater width is required pursuant to Subsection F, or a lesser width is allowed pursuant to ICC Subsections H-K of this section.

Stream Type	Standard Buffer
S	See ICC 17.05 [17.05A]
F	150
Np	75
Ns	75

- E. Other Aquatic and Deep Water Habitats. Buffers for ponds and lakes that are less than 20 acres in size and greater than 6.6 feet deep, are not regulated as Shorelines of the State under ICC 17.05A and are not regulated as wetlands under ICC 17.02A, shall extend 75 feet from the ordinary high water mark. In the case where a lake or pond meeting these criteria has fringe wetland adjacent to it, the larger of the wetland or FWHCA buffer shall apply.
- Recreational uses shall be allowed on deep water ponds provided they are consistent with the provisions of ICC 17.02B.
 - Overwater structure may be allowed on deep water ponds provided they attain necessary state approvals and permits and are constructed and operated consistent with ICC 17.02B.
- F. Increasing Buffer Widths. The Director has the authority to increase the standard buffer widths on a case-by-case basis when a larger buffer is determined to be necessary to protect stream water quality or a protected species. A decision to increase the standard buffer shall be based on the intensity of the proposed use, the functions of the stream and the condition of the existing buffer. For example, stream buffers that contain unstable slopes may require larger buffer widths; PRDs using density bonuses may warrant increased buffer widths. However, an applicant may enhance any such buffer (such as through bioengineering using native plants) to maintain the standard buffer width following submittal, review and approval of a BSA which demonstrates that the enhancement will provide a buffer which protects riparian function as well as or better than the increased buffer width.
- G. Buffer Averaging. Buffer widths may be modified by “averaging” where the total area and habitat functions of the buffer after averaging are no less than that provided by the standard buffer and all increases in buffer dimension are parallel to the habitat conservation area.

1. Buffer width averaging shall be allowed only where the mitigation sequencing requirements of ICC 17.02B.70.B have been applied and the applicant demonstrates, through an approved BSA, that one of the following conditions apply:
 - a. A decrease in a portion of the buffer is necessary to accomplish the purpose of the proposed project and no reasonable alternative is available; or
 - b. Averaging would allow the applicant to establish a corridor of native vegetation between natural systems.
 2. A BSA must also demonstrate the following criteria for buffer averaging to be allowed:
 - a. Decreasing the buffer width will not adversely affect fish and wildlife habitat functions and values; and
 - b. The total area within the buffer shall not be reduced, and the buffer area added must be contiguous to the existing buffer ;
 - c. The portion of the buffer being added must be of the same or greater quality and maintain the same level of stream and riparian function as the portion of the buffer being lost. The Director may determine that the replacement buffer portion must be larger than the lost buffer, i.e. greater than a 1:1 ratio, if it is located further from the stream or provides a lower level of stream function or protection; and
 - d. The standard buffer width shall not be reduced by more than 25 percent for any stream or aquatic habitat.
- H. Buffer Reduction. The Director shall have the authority to approve, through the Type II permit process, a reduction of the standard buffer on a case-by-case basis when an applicant for a buffer reduction has demonstrated, through an approved BSA relying on best available science and prepared by a qualified professional, that the following conditions and criteria have been met:
1. The applicant has proposed habitat restoration or enhancement activities that would result in improved habitat, water quality or water flow processes or functions of the adjacent stream;
 2. The buffer reduction is necessary to accomplish the purpose of a proposed project and no reasonable alternative is available given specific site characteristics; and
 3. The applicant has demonstrated application of the avoidance and minimization standards of ICC 17.02B.70.B; and
 4. The standard buffer width shall not be reduced by more than 25 percent for any stream or aquatic habitat.
- I. Interrupted Buffers. Where a legally established and constructed public roadway transects a riparian buffer, the Director may approve a modification of the standard buffer width to the edge of the roadway, provided:
1. The isolated part of the buffer provides insignificant biological, geological or hydrological buffer functions relating to the riparian area; and

2. If the resulting buffer distance is less than 50% of the standard buffer for the applicable stream type or shoreline designation, no further reduction shall be allowed.
- J. When a critical area lies in the shoreline jurisdiction but its buffer falls outside of shoreline jurisdiction, the buffer shall be established and subject to the requirements of this chapter.
- K. A buffer may not be both averaged and reduced. One mechanism or the other must be selected for a particular buffer
- L. In the case of any approved alteration to a FWHCA or associated buffer that requires mitigation, restoration, or enhancement, a monitoring plan shall be included with the BSA that is consistent with ICC 17.02B.70.

17.02B.530 Protection Standards – Other Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

- A. Bald Eagle. Bald Eagle habitats shall be protected pursuant to the Washington State Bald Eagle Protection Rules (Chapter 232-12-292 WAC). If the Director determines that the scope or timing of the proposal may create an adverse impact or adversely affect the eagle nest territory, he/she shall require the preparation of a Habitat Management Plan which must be approved by the Department of Fish and Wildlife and signed by the landowner prior to any clearing or construction whenever activities that alter habitat are proposed near a verified nest territory.
- B. Washington Natural Heritage Program Areas
 1. South Camano and Keystone. South Camano is inventoried as a significant plant community dominated by Big Leaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). Keystone is inventoried as a significant plant community dominated by Douglas Fir, Western Hemlock and Swordfern. Natural vegetation between the ordinary high water mark and the top of banks and bluffs ten (10) feet or higher shall be retained, except for removal of hazardous, diseased or damaged trees and to allow for pedestrian waterfront access. Removal of invasive non-native species is authorized. Trimming but not removal for view enhancement is authorized.
 2. Grasser's Hill. Grasser's Hill is inventoried as a significant plant community including white-top aster (*Sericocarpus rigidus*), a Protected Species. A Biological Site Assessment shall be prepared pursuant to ICC 17.02.050.C.2 and a habitat management plan (HMP) shall be prepared pursuant to ICC 17.02.050.C.8 to ensure protection of the white-top aster.
 3. West Beach and Ebey's Landing. West Beach and Ebey's Landing are inventoried as a significant plant community including golden indian paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*), a Protected Species. A Biological Site Assessment shall be prepared pursuant to ICC 17.02.050.C.2 and a habitat management plan (HMP) shall be prepared pursuant to ICC 17.02.050.C.8 to ensure protection of the golden indian paintbrush.
 4. All other high quality terrestrial ecosystems per Washington Natural Heritage Program. Projects affecting these areas will require mitigation sequencing, as demonstrated through the preparation of a BSA in consultation with the Washington Natural Heritage Program.

- C. All other FWHCA shall be protected on a case-by-case basis depending on the vulnerable resource and proposed activity or development.
- D. Buffers shall be established adjacent to FWHCA as necessary to protect the ecological integrity, structure and functions of the resource from development induced impacts. Buffer widths shall reflect the sensitivity of the species or habitat present and the type and intensity of the proposed adjacent human use or activity.
- E. The Director shall determine the appropriate buffer for FWHCA other than streams based on best available science and the following guidance:

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Area	Buffer Requirement
Areas with a primary association with endangered, threatened, and sensitive species	Buffer shall be based on management recommendations provided by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife PHS Program and shall consider site-specific conditions and recommendation of qualified professional.
State Natural Area Preserves, Natural Resource Conservation Areas, and State Wildlife Areas	Buffers shall not be required adjacent to these areas. These areas are assumed to encompass the land required for species preservation. The Director may impose a new or increase the applicable structural setback if it is determined that a proposed structure would infringe on or inhibit use of the entire property for species preservation.
Species and Habitats of Local importance	The need for and dimensions of buffers for approved species and habitats of local importance shall be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Director according to adopted Habitat Management Plans for the specific resource (ICC 17.02B.600)

- F. If in reviewing the BSA and proposal, the County determines that impacts to a protected species or habitat may occur as a result of a proposal, a habitat management plan (HMP) may be required. An applicant may choose to complete an HMP for a site-specific analysis to better determine the impact to habitat and to determine the appropriate buffer width for their project based on the site-specific analysis. The preparation and submission of this report is the responsibility of the applicant. The report shall rely on best available science and shall be prepared by a qualified professional. The County may retain a qualified professional at the applicant's expense to review and confirm the applicant's reports, studies and plans.
- G. The HMP may be combined with the BSA. The HMP must be consistent with the Management Recommendations adopted by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the specific attributes of the affected properties, such as, but not limited to, property size and configuration, surrounding land use, and the practicability of implementing the HMP, and the adaptation of the species to human activity.
- H. Standard Habitat Management Plan. Where the County has developed a standard HMP, the applicant may either accept and sign the standard HMP or prepare his or her own HMP pursuant to ICC 17.02B.530.D and E.
 - 1. The County has developed a standard HMP for Bald Eagles and Blue Iris.

2. From time to time as the lists of Protected Species and Species of Local Importance are amended, the County may develop additional standard HMPs, modify adopted standards; and/or delete HMP requirements.

17.02B.540 Additional Provisions – Habitats and Species of Local Importance

- A. Any proposed development or activity that would result in an adverse alteration to or impact on a species or habitat of local importance, as defined in ICC 17.02B.300, and listed in Section 17.02B.600, shall be subject to review on a case-by-case basis by the Director.
- B. If the Director determines that the scope or timing of the proposal may create or result in an adverse impact or adversely affect a habitat or species of local importance, the Director shall have the authority to require an assessment of the effects of the alteration on habitats and species of local importance and may require preparation of a BSA consistent with ICC 17.02.510.
- C. The Director shall also have the authority to require the preparation of a HMP, consistent with the requirements of ICC 17.02B.530.G though ICC 17.02B.530.G, which must be approved by the Department of Fish and Wildlife and signed by the landowner prior to issuing a permit for the proposed activity.

17.02B.550 General Standards – Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

The following performance standards are intended to protect FWHCA and associated buffers as well as interrelated ecosystems in shoreline jurisdiction:

- A. All development proposals on lands containing FWHCA and associated buffers or that contain lands important to the function of such species and habitats in adjacent shoreline jurisdiction shall apply the standards of the following ICC Chapters:

1. 11.02 Clearing and Grading Requirements
2. 11.03 Stormwater and Surface Water
3. 8.07D On-Site Sewage Systems

The Director may condition proposals that have the potential to result in adverse ecological impacts to species and habitats to conform to the most stringent applicable requirements and to optimally implement referenced regulations such as by implementing low impact development standards, minimizing clearing, and retaining vegetation, particularly native vegetation.

- B. All developments and uses shall control erosion during project construction and operation.
- C. All developments and uses shall be located, designed, constructed, and managed to minimize interference with beneficial natural processes such as water circulation, infiltration and recharge, erosion, and accretion. The Director may condition proposals that have the potential to result in adverse ecological impacts to such natural processes important for fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, such as stream baseflows, to optimally implement such regulations such as applying low impact development standards, minimizing clearing, and retaining vegetation, particularly native vegetation.

- D. To the extent possible, projects shall be designed to protect hydrologic connections and fish passage between water bodies, water courses, wetlands, and FWHCA.
- E. To the extent possible, existing native vegetation within buffers shall be maintained in an undisturbed condition.
- F. Natural habitat features such as snags, stumps, logs, drift logs, or uprooted trees shall be left undisturbed to support fish and wildlife species, except where they would be a safety risk to structures.
- G. Development at the top of bluffs where the bluff crest is outside of shoreline jurisdiction shall be setback adequately to account for 100 years of erosion in the absence of a bulkhead or shoreline armoring. Compliance with this requirement shall be demonstrated by submitting a report prepared by a qualified professional (a licensed geologist or geotechnical engineer) which documents and quantifies the following:
 - 1. The rate of expected erosion; and
 - 2. The setback necessary to ensure compliance with this requirement.

17.02B.560 Wetlands: Reserved

17.02B.570 Geological Hazardous Areas: Reserved

ARTICLE 6. APPENDIX

17.02B.600 Habitats and Species of Local Importance Nomination Process

- A. Any person may nominate for designation, or propose de-designation, of a species or habitat of local importance in accordance with a Type IV permit process. Nominations will be processed pursuant to Chapter 16.19 and 16.26 ICC. Nominated habitats or species must meet the definition in ICC 17.02B.300. Proposals for de-designation of a species or habitat of local importance shall follow the same process as a nomination for designation, except that the proponent shall demonstrate that all designation criteria in Subsection B no longer apply, such as due to federal or state de-listing of protected species, recovery has been achieved, or other facts that support that the species is no longer vulnerable or is protected through other means.
- B. Nominations for habitats or species of local importance shall include the following:
 - 1. Identification of the habitat or species being nominated. Identification shall include, at a minimum, the following information:
 - a. A legible map or maps of species and/or habitat location(s);
 - b. Specific features to be protected (for example, nest sites, breeding areas, nurseries, vegetation communities) or, if a habitat is being nominated in its entirety, a description of the habitat, its structure, function, species, and geographic boundaries of the habitat(s) encompassed, and any other relevant attributes; and

- c. An analysis of the habitat and hydrological functions and location of the area relative to already designated critical areas and the nearest similar habitat if known.
 - d. The Director has the authority to alter these requirements if he/she determines that alternative methods of identification or characterization are more accurate or reliable.
 2. A demonstrated need for special consideration based on:
 - a. Habitat or species rarity or vulnerability to rarity as evidenced by restricted, small or declining species population and habitats or community loss or degradation; or
 - b. Vulnerability to habitat perturbation, including a discussion of and the potential cause of that perturbation; or
 - c. The need for protection, maintenance, and/or restoration of the nominated habitat to ensure the long term persistence of a species; or
 - d. The ability of the site to disproportionately contribute to regional biodiversity as evidenced by species use, richness, abundance, and/or rarity; or
 - e. The commercial, recreational, cultural, or other special value; or
 - f. The need for maintaining connectivity between habitat areas.
 3. An explanation of why special protection is needed and how existing County, State and federal programs and regulations do not provide adequate protection.
 4. Proposed management strategies for the species or habitats. Management strategies must be supported by best available science.
 5. Identification of effects on property ownership and use.
 6. The Director may, on a case-by-case basis require additional information needed to evaluate the resource being nominated.
- C. Nomination proposals shall be reviewed by the County and may be forwarded to the State Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, and/or other local, State, federal, and/or Tribal agencies or experts for comments and recommendations.
- D. The Director shall determine whether the nomination proposal is complete and, if complete pursuant to criteria in Subsection B and requirements of ICC 16.19, shall evaluate it according to the characteristics enumerated in this section and make a recommendation to the Planning Commission based on those findings.
- E. The Planning Commission shall hold a Public Hearing for proposals found to be complete, and make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to approve or deny the nomination based on the standards enumerated in Subsection B.
- F. Following the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the Board of Commissioners shall designate a Habitat or Species of Local Importance that:
1. Satisfies the nomination criteria and includes the information required in Subsection B; and

2. Is supported by best available science for the subject species or habitat of local importance; and
3. For which management strategies are practicable; and
4. Without protection, there is a likelihood that the species or habitat will not persist over the long term.

G. Habitats and Species of Local Importance and Protected Species that have been approved for designation by Island County Include:⁹

Protected Species List – Flora

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Federal Status
Agoseris elata	tall agoseris	sensitive	
Sericocarpus rigidus	white-top aster	sensitive	species of concern
Castilleja levisecta	golden indian paintbrush	endangered	listed threatened
Circuta bulbifera	bulb bearing water hemlock	sensitive	
Fritillaria camschatcensis	black lily	sensitive	
Meconella oregana	white meconella	threatened	species of concern
Puccinella nutkaensis	Alaska alkaligrass		

Species and Habitats of Local Importance List

Scientific Name	Common Name	Protected Area	State Status	Federal Status
Ardea herodias	great blue heron	Nest sites		
Pandion haliaetus	osprey	Nests		
Dryocopus pileatus	pileated woodpecker	Nest Sites		
Cygnus buccinator	trumpeter swan	Foraging habitat		
Whidbey Island Game Farm/ Au Sable Institute	Not applicable	Property		

1 As defined by Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitats and Species Program (2008).

⁹ See Audit for dispensation of species and habitats. Species already protected as federal or state endangered, threatened or sensitive species not called out. Other species (common loon) or habitat areas specified in 17.02 Appendix – Bos Lake, Newman Road Lakes, Penn Cove, Crockett Lake, Cultus Bay Flats, Hastie Lake, Deer Lagoon, and Useless Bay – are already well regulated either under the Shoreline Master Program or Wetlands Regulations.